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ABSTRACT

Some research has been done on culture shock, and some lesser-known research has looked at the phenomenon in older elementary school age children. Studies have examined the stages of culture shock, its effects on the already largely formed personality, immigrant experiences in America and its public schools, language use in the home, second language learning, and family attitudes. Some of the mistakes schools commonly make with immigrant children are mismatching of language skill level, using culturally bound materials, and not making provision for intercultural interaction among children. Providing language activities that are culturally loaded in favor of the students and understandable in the second language as a supplement to the regular English-as-a-second-language curriculum would help to balance the school experience for these students. Native country educational practices and attitudes should also be considered. Administrators should create conditions that would promote literacy in this group, researchers need to communicate what they learn about these problems to the public, teachers must be courageous in trying new solutions, and the public should be more aware of the problems and possibilities for progress. Descriptions of teacher-developed class activities are included. (MSE)

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"Exploring the Definition of Culture Shock and Second Language Learning in Elementary School - Grades 4-8."

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EXPLORING THE DEFINITION OF CULTURE SHOCK AND SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (GRADES 4-8)

As with all problems -- the questions come long before the solutions. The examination of culture shock in older elementary school children forces us back into the examination of forces that have existed for generation upon generation. In the past few months, we have heard or read about through the media, several success stories regarding the high academic achievement of our foreign-born students. For these students and others to come, we express our happiness and satisfaction. However, we continue to be concerned about the others -- those who fail and drop out or who are borderline "success" stories. Do immigrant children, on the whole, have fewer problems than their parents in adjusting to a new way of life? Do they, in fact, adjust easier and learn faster than the older adults? What is the definition of an elementary school child in our time?

There have been some important studies on culture shock and its symptoms in adults. What is less known is that there are also some important studies on culture shock of older students in elementary school. The purpose of this paper is to review some of this literature and in the light of this research, suggest some ways of developing what we might tentatively call "culturally loaded" language activities.

What are the parameters of culture shock? H.Douglas Brown, in his book, Principles of Language Learning and Teaching, quotes Peter Adler's study (1972) who believes that culture shock is a form of anxiety that results from the loss of commonly understood signs and symbols of social contacts and relationships. The underlying insecurity may involve loneliness, anger, frustration and questioning of self-competence. (1)

Drawing on additional research studies, Brown suggests that culture shock may be broken down into four stages: 1) a period of joy and excite-

ment over finally reaching the "promised land" wherever that may be, 2) disorientation begins to emerge when an individual feels an intrusion of more and more cultural differences into one's own image of self and security. During this second period, an individual seeks out the support of fellow countrymen in the new culture and takes comfort in complaining about local conditions and customs and thereby seeks escape from the predicament. Third, some type of recovery begins and problems of assimilation begin to be resolved. The last or fourth stage represents an acceptance of the new culture and self-confidence in the "new" person that has developed through assimilation and integration of the new culture. (2) This does not mean that problems no longer exist within the person -- some conflicts can continue -- but it does mean that there is a kind of healthy forward looking acceptance of the present way of life and its circumstances. A sort of "know-how" has developed for dealing with and participating in the new culture.

Here, we might interject some questions and ask whether or not native-born persons also go through the same stages of culture shock, but with less intensity than the immigrant person. Do we as a society experience a sense of disorientation when foreign-born persons enter into our established way of life causing language and cultural dilemmas? What happens to <u>us</u> when the usual cues of cultural reciprocity do not seem to apply? Do we seek comfort in the support of our fellow countrymen to complain about local conditions and thereby seek escape from our predicament? Do these stages of culture shock, for both native and foreign-born persons, infiltrate our institutions? In particular, does it infiltrate the school system -- the students, teachers, administrators at various levels and even the communities who feed into this school system? The answer is undeniably -- YES!

Culture shock is discussed by Brown and others, in terms of the formed personality. It is discussed in terms of persons who are assumed to have a

developed self-identity. But we ask the question, what is the nature of culture shock in a person for whom self-identity is in the formation process?

Culture shock of a sort, is experienced by the native-born youngster who attends school for the first time. The arena of the school is not the hearth of the home. The role of teacher is not the role of mother or father. The roles bear resemblances, but not duplication. There are new relationships, both with adults and with peers. There are new expectations as well as a direct breakthrough of definite responsibilities for the child at this time.

Culture shock of a kind is experienced by the native-born eighth grader entering into high school or by the high school senior applying for a full-time job. In effect, the bridge for these types of cultural changes for a child is built by a certain kind of preparedness or readiness for the new situation which the culture of that child provides. In so providing for the readiness of the developing child, all the preps of the native culture support and help to develop the self-identity of the child and its continued development. May we now ask the next question: if a native-born student, who experiences the support of the culture in education, recreational activities, religious support systems, parental and friendship circles, can still experience anxiety in new situations, what then of the student for whom most of the cultural supports have been removed? What then happens? We have not yet brought in the double-barreled shot of language loss -- the bloodline of cultural life.

The image of "foreign" as a negative force in children's development was especially common in the United States during the early part of this century. To be bilingual and bicultural was regarded as a liability that not only caused confusion in children's thinking, so it was thought, but also prevented them from becoming "good Americans." Therefore, it was felt,

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that a pre-condition for teaching children the school language was the eradication of their bilingualism. It is not surprising that research studies conducted about this period (Darcy 1953) often found that bilingual children did poorly at school and experienced many emotional conflicts. Children were made to feel that it was necessary to reject the home culture in order to belong to the majority culture, often ending up unable to identify fully with either cultural group.(3)In this situation, language of the heart can become the missing item.

Bernard Weiss, editing a book of readings entitled American Education and the European Immigrant 1840-1940, provides us with some of the following information. In one of the book's essays written by Salvatore LaGumina entitled "American Education and the Italian Immigrant Response," LaGumina quotes Jane Addams who, from a Chicago perspective, talked about a situation in which the schools had little understanding about as well as little respect for the Italian way of life. She complained that this attitude cut into family loyalty and took away one of the most valuable traits of the immigrant child. Weiss' book continues that until the 1920's, most children from immigrant families could not afford to stay in school. In addition, the overcrowding of schools made real instruction extremely difficult. At the turn of the 19th century, about 1810, children in New York were taught in classes of 500, one teacher supervising 50 monitors who in turn drilled ten children each in the three R's: American History, morals and manners. Most of the children did not attend the "Free School" and truancy and dropping out was widespread. Can we wonder why? Upper and middle-class children were educated in other ways besides the Free School, but lower-class youngsters, society's real aim, received little schooling. At the turn of the 20th century, it was still not unusual in large cities to have very large classes of 100 each, running on half-day shifts, with poorly trained, young teachers having morning and afternoon sessions. They could see as many as 200 children per day. In my own family, an aunt began teaching at

the age of 15. She began with a first grade class which had slightly more than 100 children in it. A teacher in the next classroom also had first grade with a "few more children." My aunt relates, however, that the students were not, for her anyway, difficult to teach. They were well-mannered and did their work. Her early classes were composed mainly of Polish immigrant children. She stayed in teaching for 50 years.

Compulsory school attendance finally became a law in 1903, but it was often not enforced. Until then, a youngster could leave school at the age of 12 or grade 5, whichever came first. In 1913, the school attendance age was raised to 16, but still not often enforced. Immigrant families depended on children for family income, and often birth certificates were not available. If the children looked older, parents could lie about the age and get working papers issued. In addition, the country's economy was different then. It was not unusual to have a job within three or four days after getting through Ellis Island. The industrialization of the country had taken a strong hold and many openings were around in garment factories, on docks, in small businesses, construction work. In fact, as Weiss' book points out -- this is where real acculturation took place -- on the job. The expanding economy, rather than formal schooling, was the real generator of assimilation. From fellow workers, bosses and union leaders, migrants soon learned how the American system worked. Wages were terrible, hours worse, but the possibility of building up a little reserve was possible. It was in this way, that newcomers moved up the socio-economic ladder. Most of all, regardless of how uneducated the family, somebody in it was able to work and often the entire family was involved in some kind of income-producing work. Despite conflicts between themselves and their parents regarding behavior in the new world, the children, by and large, were able to see their parents as persons who were "making it."

Because the early history of the public schools is not widely known

by today's public, formal education has been given too much credit for the literacy and acculturation that eventually happened. As a result, in the late fifties after World War II, when the public school again began to have great difficulty absorbing the children of Black and Hispanic migrants, the latest groups to come to the "promised land," most people had forgotten that poor children from rural backgrounds had always created problems that the public schools had never been very successful in solving.

Formal education today is still in the midst of assimilation problems. This time schools are making more effort to bring in culture and first language, but the masses of people do not remember that this was necessary in an earlier time. Today's economy, however, is a much different picture from 1900. We speak of it now as the post-industrial age -- the high-tech age of market services. Strong backs are not much in demand. Students who leave school today at age 16 have very little hope of making a decent life for themselves tomorrow. (4).

What are the difficulties for youngsters who today come from one culture and must learn to live bilingually and biculturally in a second culture? The older elementary school child is very aware of peer relationships and it is very important "to belong." But, there are many things that mark them as "different" and often immigrant children are painfully aware of these differences. Classmates laugh at foreign ways of dressing or speaking, sometimes mimicking the first language of the student by making gibberish sounds. Sometimes classmates simply laugh at the youngster without giving reasons why they are laughing. Have we noticed that most foreign youngsters jump quickly into wearing jeans and gym shoes to school? Is it because they like the style? Is it because these clothes help make them socially acceptable? It is interesting to note that some students, depending on culture and sex, change into their own native country clothes when coming home from school.

Probably the deepest, most important and least measurable of the factors affecting the adjustment of the older elementary school child is the degree of ambivalence of the parent regarding the new culture. Parent conferences, especially at the time of report card pick-up, often reveal a lack of understanding regarding the child's school problems and the enormous difficulties of studying academic subjects in a second language.

A number of studies show that the use of the first language in the homes of immigrant students is not a handicap to their learning a second language. As Bhatnager (1980), Chesarek (1981) and Wells (1979) have pointed out, what is important is the relationship a child has with an adult who is meaningful to them. If the father, for example, does not speak English, or sometimes even refuses to try to speak English in the home, it doesn't appear to matter as long as the child has a good relationship with that parent.

What does appear to be a handicap is a parent who is unsure or even hostile toward the majority culture and insecure about his/her own place in it. This insecurity is felt not only by foreign-born families, but also by native-born families who are minority group members of the main culture. In such cases, the ambivalence of the parents can reflect in the child's poor performance in school because the child does not know which behavior is most acceptable and whose values to emulate. Parents not only carry the culture to their children, they interpret it. If the parents are unable to interpret the differences between the first and second culture, the children have to forge their own way. Some are successful in this forging, many others are not. (Cummins, 1978-79)

One suggestion made by Berryman, in TESL Talk (1983) is that immigrant parents have a need to attempt to learn the second language and by so doing, demonstrate to their children a positive attitude to the new way of

life. However, if they wish to have their children become really bilingual, it is important, even necessary, for immigrant parents to communicate with their children in the first language, for it is usually in the first language that there is a true and purposeful parent-child relationship.

In addition, parents who speak only a foreign language can sometimes embarass their children. Elementary school children are used as translators for their parents in a variety of circumstances: translating for them when the electric company sends a turn-off notice, translating for them when talking to the landlord, translating for the policeman who needs information, for the doctor, for the school. What happens to the meaningful relationship between parent and child, when the parent no longer seems to be in charge? The problem is compounded when the parent is unable to find work and take the responsibility of providing for the family. Berryman suggests that the struggle for identity is painful in at least two ways. To be both American and anything else, often means that one is not wholly either. Sometimes this means not belonging anywhere. Sometimes it can encourage a young person to wipe out an entire side of their character.(5)

In an article in TIME magazine -- the "Immigrants" issue -- (July 1985), a story was related about a 12 year-old Haitian boy who landed on a Florida beach in 1979. Desperate to belong, he changed his name from Phede to Fred, learned to speak fluent English and became an A student in high school. He sang in the school chorus and worked at a local Burger King. Not even his girl friend suspected that he was Haitian. One evening, Fred's sister came to the burger outlet and spoke to him in Creole -- his girl friend was standing nearby. The next day, Fred committed suicide by buying a gun and shooting himself. His father said that the boy felt the rejection of the Haitian to such a degree that he did what he could to hide his own origin. Was this youngster experiencing culture shock while he was in elementary school? We will never know. Since he was an A student in high school, he

probably was considered an example of how easily young people adjust to new ways. (6)

But, there are success stories. In Parade Magazine (June 1985), a Sunday supplement of the Chicago Sun-Times newspaper, a long article appeared regarding successful Asian-Americans. The article eventually differentiated among Asians, breaking them down into Japanese, Chinese, Philippino and Korean. Further reading of the article showed that the parents of most of these successful youngsters, were not only literate in their own language, but functioning well as professionals before they chose to migrate to the U.S. Certainly, the fact that the parents were literate professionals in their own country and had the option of choice in their decision to migrate, had something to do with the success of their youngsters in school. Contrast this with migrating families where the parents are illiterate in their first language, are unskilled laborers and have no option in migration, but rather, are forced out of their own country because of war or repression. The successful immigrant child often has parents who see education, not only as a merit for its own sake, but also as a means of social mobility. On the other hand, the child who sees a parent grappling with the culture and perhaps failing in the workplace or in other areas of survival, may begin to wonder whether anything in the future will be different for them. During the past year, I have begun to hear a few Cambodian children say of themselves, "Cambodians don't know anything. They can't do anything." Another, academically successful Cambodian child, now in sixth grade, believes Cambodians aren't smart because they don't have any real machinery. These children are rejecting the spirit of their culture, but what will take its place -- language alone?

It appears that the important conclusion to be drawn here is that generally, the greater the cultural gap between the parents' first culture and the second culture, the greater the ambivalence of the parent in ac-

cepting the second culture. This ambivalence and insecurity appears to be transmitted to the child. In addition, if the migrating families have many negative experiences in the second culture, such as raping of women, burglaries, brutal physical assaults, the second culture becomes very repugnant. Motivation to learn the second language becomes minimal. The very real fear of stepping out the door to discover the finer parts of the second culture is discouraged by the feeling of lack of safety. Therefore, the conclusion tends to be: Stay with one's own kind!

As we slowly understand the backgrounds of the many different types of children we work with, we see that many well-intentioned educational activities fall short because they ignore the whole area of cross-cultural understanding and adjustment. Kleinmann, in an article in TESOL Quarterly, 1982, states that the relevance of such factors such as resettlement problems is so self-evident that they hardly deserve mentioning except for the fact that such influences have been given little attention in second language research and teaching, let alone in curriculum development. Perhaps it is because language specialists consider these influences to be out of their control. He concludes that the absence of a strategy to address the problem of culture leaves ESL programs wanting in spite of excellent design. (7)

Much research has been done on the kindergarten child who is learning a second language, but it is sometimes used as examples of how elementary children, in general, regardless of age, learn a second language. As we know, the kindergarten curriculum is not heavy on reading, writing or content areas. The language skills which are needed in the intermediate and upper grade levels of elementary school are far more than oral. If this were not the case, there would be relatively few problems. But we do not define a literate person as one who only speaks the language. True literacy, in current definition, includes successful achievement in a

variety of reading and writing tasks. At the intermediate grade level and certainly in the upper grades, the vocabulary and sentence structures of textbooks are long and complex. In addition, we do not assume that simply because a student can handle the basal reader, that they will naturally be able to assume the tasks of reading and writing in content areas such as social studies and science. Literacy in literature implied an understanding of the author's story line. It implied a general understanding of various character personalities. It often uses fantasy and imagination to achieve these goals. Last, but not least, literature is often culture bound. In contrast, content area studies are primarily facts and ideas: their accumulation, systematization and clarification. It means analytical reading of tables and graphs. Even if the books are liberally splashed with pictures, the quality of the written text is such that it requires definite previous experience in abstract knowledge which is usually received prior to the grade level in which the student is currently enrolled.

Simply to place a new student, speaking no English, into an upper grade room and let him/her be surrounded by language sounds is not providing that student with comprehensible input. We are providing noise and no matter how much "noise" is heard, little understanding takes place, if somehow the noise does not become comprehensible. It takes many years before a native-born first language learner, in any country, progresses to the point of understanding abstract language. Nearly all of early language development is embedded in concrete situations which have personal need as the goal of communication. These early language experiences are not only verbal, but contain many nonverbal clues that help the young learner understand meaning.

When a student enters the school system at zero language level, at any grade level, conceptual skill development is suspended, sometimes for

several years, depending on the language learning ability of the student and at what grade level, the student has entered into the school system. Students who are fortunate enough to have had prior school experience before entering intermediate or upper grade placements have a much better chance for success than youngsters who come into these same grade levels with no prior school experience. James Cummins suggests, in a book of readings entitled Schooling and Language Minority Students: A theoretical framework, that when a child is lacking first language development and when there is little chance of providing that development, then we must consider providing some sort of "conditions" which can give a cushion for the ambivalence in self-identity. (8)

One source of reaching an L2 student with understanding is to play with other children outside of school, on the playground and in the neighborhood. This can be an excellent source of "teaching." However, in many areas, especially big cities, neighborhoods can present safety problems and parents feel insecure about letting their children play outside. In addition, many large city school systems are on "closed campus" which means that once the children are inside the building, they do not leave the school again for recess or lunch until the school day is over. While this cuts down on safety problems, it also reduces the potential for language learning that comes from play activities. It also cuts down on the social life and the possibilities of making friends outside of the classroom situation. Safety problems do not exist in all parts of the country, to the same degree. Degrees of safety also vary in urban areas, but where the safety problem in a community is severe, the burden on the school becomes far more complex. Unfortunately, new arrivals to the U.S. often are resettled into the poorest and even very unsafe neighborhoods in urban areas. Many newcomers then experience the stereotype of the ugly American on our own soil.

To recount all my classroom experiences which have shown acculturation stages would take too much time. For the purpose of this paper, I would like to mention only a few --

Romania -"My name is ---. My first day in America was sad. I didn't enjoy other children playing because I couldn't understand and speak the language. I didn't go to school because it was summer vacation. I had to wait to see how a school in the United States was. I had to go to -- School in Chicago. I really enjoyed the children. I met many Romanian children. There was a Romanian teacher who helped us learn English." (After a few months, the student moved to another school in a more difficult neighborhood and had a harder time adjusting. A Romanian teacher was not available and no other Romanian children were in the school except for a family of cousins who had also transferred. However, the youngster had strong family support and continuous prior schooling before her seventh grade placement in the second school. At the end of eighth grade, she was reading at 7.1 on a national achievement test. She received 115 minutes of ESL time per day, both years of her school attendance.)

Iran - "Most of the people that are newcomers in a city or country are shy to do many things like going to the store by themselves. But they get over it as the time passes. At first, I had the same problem when I came to school. At school all of the students and teachers thought I didn't know anything, but really I knew many things in my own language, but I didn't know how to say it in English." (After arrival in the U.S., this student was placed into a seventh grade room. He had prior, continuous schooling as well as a father who spoke English. The children, however, did not speak English. The first year, the boy had 115 minutes of ESL daily. The second year, the youngster received 115 minutes of ESL daily as well as 225 minutes per week of a bilingual Assyrian teacher. The student scored 8.1 in reading on a national achievement test at the end of grade 8.)

Cambodia -"My name is ---. I came from the Continent of Asia...My first day in school was very difficult for me because I couldn't understand the language. I couldn't speak English. All I knew was my name. I didn't make many friends...I had a hard time in my first year because of the language...Only math was a little bit easy. This year, I am in the 8th grade. I am hoping to graduate...In high school, I would like to try to take all the subjects...I will try my best to graduate." (This student arrived in the U.S. four years before graduating from eighth grade. She had no prior school experience and was placed in grade 5. There were many adjustment problems for the family, but an American sponsor gave them a great deal of time for several years. This young girl refused to identify herself as Cambodian in this short composition because she didn't want to be laughed at. She began to develop into an excellent writer, but all her stories had tragic endings until she was in eighth grade. The stories then began to have neutral endings regarding family relationships. The youngster was placed in an ESL pull-out program in grade 5 and then placed in a self-contained ESL room for grade 6. Regular classroom subjects were taught in the ESL class on appropriate language levels. In grades 7 and 8, she was again mainstreamed into the regular classroom and received ESL time for 115 minutes per day. The year she graduated from eighth grade, the youngster was reading at 7.2 according to a national achievement test. At that time, she was also accepted into a three week summer program for gifted children.)

Iraq - "When I first got here, the first thing I had to learn is how to read fast. The fifth day I came to this school I brought the material that they needed for the next day. The next day, we had reading

the second period and we were reading by turns. The next person was me so I read and most of the students were laughing at me because I was reading slow and didn't know some of the words. Then it was time to go home and I was practicing reading and I got better and better. Now, no one laughs because I can read.
(This student had prior schooling, continuously, before being placed in grade 7 upon arrival to the U.S. His father, however, refused to speak English in the home. This student had 115 minutes of ESL daily for two years. In grade 8, he also had 225 minutes per week from a bilingual Assyrian teacher. He graduated eighth grade with a reading score of 6.9 and attended summer school that same year to raise the reading level.)

Laos- A young girl, aged 13, was enrolled in a regular seventh grade class. She had no prior school experience and was illiterate in her own language. She had been in a refugee camp for several years. All the course work in her seventh grade class was conducted at grade level English. Four months after enrolling in the school, a self-contained ESL classroom was opened up and the girl was changed from the mainstreamed classroom to the ESL room, designed for 10-13 year olds. The ESL class also had several children from Laos. After four months in the ESL class, the young girl still appeared to have little understanding of any materials and often daydreamed, looking nowhere in particular staring into space with a slight smile on her face. Significantly, she had not spoken one word in class, in either her own language or in English. At this point, a reading teacher who had also been working with the girl mentioned that the child was possibly retarded. Other children her age, who had also come from a refugee camp and also did not have prior school experience were beginning to acquire basic English skills. No referral for testing was made at this time. Two months later, (ten months after enrollment) the girl wanted to color a picture and did not have any crayons. She came up to the ESL teacher's desk and very haltingly said, "cray...cray..." The ESL teacher asked, "Crayons?" The girl nodded yes. The first step had been taken. The youngster was enrolled in a special summer program for second language learners. She began speaking, in both her own language and in English. She also began to read and write in English. In September of that year, she was again placed in a self-contained ESL room and also had the service of a Lao bilingual teacher for 90 minutes per day. Technically, she was ready for graduation the following June, but the parents came forward and informed the ESL teacher that, in fact, the child was not 13, but 10. They had lied about her age in the refugee camp because older children received higher rations of rice. Accordingly, the birthdate on school records was changed based on parental information. Altogether, she remained two years in a self-contained ESL class and was then mainstreamed into the regular classroom in grade eight where she received 90 minutes per day of ESL and 90 minutes per day from the Laos bilingual teacher. At this time, the youngster is finishing her second year of high school and doing extremely well in the regular classroom with no ESL support. At the end of eighth grade, she scored 7.2 on the national achievement test. At this time, she has decided to study French. Here, we have a situation where the teacher had contact with a student over a long period of time and the element of time enabled the teacher to see the problems of language and culture working out. My question in retrospect is to wonder what kind of assessment would she have received if she had been recommended for psychological testing? Would she have been labeled mentally retarded or learning disabled? I doubt very much that she would have given much response even on the non-verbal part of the test, if she had been assessed one year after arrival. Fortunately, for this child, we shall never know.

In all of these situations and many others, we cannot underestimate the problem of culture shock and second language learning. My experience has been that those children coming from traumatic backgrounds such as war and refugee camps go through the first year in the U.S. in confusion, daydreaming and, now and then, anger. Generally, their manner is polite, quiet and obedient, but struggling and slow with learning. More recently, intensive ESL programs are being established in refugee camps, at least for those coming to the U.S., for older elementary school children. The adjustment to a second language-second culture is a time problem, however, for all students and often the best approach a teacher can take is a wait-and-see attitude before recommending psychological testing, attempting instead to find out as much information as possible from the family as well as incorporating material from the first culture into ESL activities.

However, this is not always the policy of the school system, where promotion and failure policies form a necessary criteria for evaluation of student achievement. My own experience in this matter related to two students who were given failure notices mid-way in the school year. Both students had been in the U.S. for 1½ years and were illiterate in their own language. Neither had prior school experience. One had been enrolled in grade four on arrival, the other student had been enrolled in grade eight. The eighth grader had already been retained once in eighth grade at the time of receiving the failure notice. The two students came to school, the next day very depressed. They had been working diligently and it was hard to believe that they could try any harder than they were already doing. Receiving a failure notice put them into the quandry of having to produce more when they were already at their peak. It took days for them to come back to normal participation in the ESL classes. During this time, I simply attempted to be extra kind and gave as few corrections as possible, with a great deal of encouragement as to what they were already doing. Although they had enough English to express their depression, the hurt

went so deep as to be "unspeakable." Since that time, more care is taken regarding failure notices for second language learners.

From what we have read in research, from my own classroom experiences as well as those of other teachers, ESL, bilingual and regular classroom, it appears that a good case can be made for developing language activities which are "culturally loaded" in favor of the student's culture. Further, it is possible to develop such activities so that they are understandable to the student in the second language. This means bringing in aspects of cultural life from the student's country and putting these experiences into the second language at a level that is appropriate for understanding. This also means discussing the similarities and differences of the first and second culture, <u>from the student's point of experience</u>. Needless to say, discussion around these experiences will not always revolve around the basic ESL text or even around a prescribed curriculum, but as language proficiency progresses, the student should feel free to raise questions and problems regarding school or community experiences. The expression of feelings are extremely important here and vocabulary that helps the student express feelings should be encouraged early in the language class. Children's fantasy stories are loaded with their own attitudes and a sensitive teacher can often read between the lines.

Most of the suggestions that will follow for developing "culturally loaded" second language activities are not meant to stand alone, but are meant to be used alongside of a basic ESL text. The development of language proficiency and cultural understanding should be an integrated experience wherever possible. It goes without saying, that this means curriculum writing on the part of the classroom teacher, not in the sense of writing completely new units, but inserting student experiences, past and present into the lesson or as spin-offs from a structured language lesson.

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ZERO SPEAKER

The first need is to build a basic oral language so that the student can begin to express simple questions and answers. For English language learners, the student is helped to identify the letters of the alphabet, to write in manuscript and cursive, to identify classroom objects and understand classroom directions. Vocabulary that names objects is supplemented with vocabulary that develops understanding of color, number, shape and size. Simple words such as "here" and "there" as well as personal pronouns and the present tense of the verb "to be" help to fill in idea structures in English. Maintaining a picture file is very important and it should include pictures of people at work, playing, family situations, clothing, food, weather, types of buildings. Any one of these topics can be expanded to include questions about the student's experiences in their native country. Drawing simple pictures about experiences and helping the student label the items in the picture increases language and also provides the opportunity for the student to share past experiences. Pictures that express feelings are very important so that students can have the vocabulary to say what makes them happy, sad, angry, excited, etc. Eventually, language experience stories can be worked into the lesson and whole units can be developed around the student's life in the new country and also from the country of migration. Picture dictionaries -- pictionaries -- are a simple way to learn objects, alphabetizing of words and classifying items. Teaching students how to play games is also very important for they will be able to share some of the games they played in their countries. An English lesson can be developed by helping the student answer a few simple questions as to how the game is played.

LOW INTERMEDIATE

At this language level, for intermediate grade students and older, geography units may be developed, alternating one unit about the country of the student with one unit on regions of the United States. Students learn some

locational skills by doing maps and finding countries around the world, including their own as well as the capital cities of those countries. Lessons can also be developed for imaginary travel tours where the student devises a vacation of a certain length of time, chooses the transportation, takes a partner and tells the rest of the class the important things they "saw" on their tour. The travel tour is a spin-off activity after the unit on a certain area of the world or of the United States has been taught. At that point, the student is familiar with the vocabulary of the unit, with some map skills regarding that country or region and can answer simple questions as well as construct simple questions about the unit. Sentences at this level use present time, but the past time is introduced.

Some of the Classic Comics, at least the easier versions can also be used because they are picture based and yet introduce the student to quality literature and language. Students can take character parts and act out the various roles in the story. The student is asked to identify the feelings of the different characters and to identify the situations that developed these feelings. The process of analytical thinking in the second language is being introduced in this type of lesson.

HIGH INTERMEDIATE

This language level has an approximate reading level of 3.5 - 4.0. For the upper grade student, it is very important to know the biographies of famous persons who had difficulties, but survived them and gave something to the world. After reading such biographies as Helen Keller, Louis Braille, Louis Pasteur, Newton, Joan of Arc, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Gandhi and others, students often ask if the stories are true. They have to be assured many times, that indeed the stories are true and that this material is not a made-up story for a movie or from television. Historical background is brought in by the teacher and sequencing of ideas is more structured at this language level. The interest level for these types of

international stories is extremely high for the seventh and eighth grade student. By rotating these stories with important biographies of famous persons in U.S. History, the student gradually receives American History as well as an understanding of the contributions of important people from many countries. This allows the student to see his/her own country and the United States within the larger framework of international life. In so doing, each country becomes one among equals, rather than one country becoming THE outstanding region of the world. Spin-off activities from studying world biographies include story writing, sometimes at first only a paragraph or two in length. Often, however, there is a student who loves to write fantasy stories and the stories of these students can be turned into miniature plays which give everyone a chance to read and participate. Sentences at this language level use past time and more complicated verb structures as well as an increase in the number of words being used in the sentences.

Evaluation of the learning activities is usually only oral at the zero level of language, but for the advanced beginner and higher language levels, both oral and written evaluations are given at the end of each unit. Depending on the language level, a unit can take anywhere from one week to three or four weeks.

Learning takes place to the extent that it is made comprehensible. Therefore, second language learners can make it in a "sink or swim" program only if they receive understandable material from somewhere or the linguistic level of the class is generally lowered.

Creating "culturally loaded" units is only one part of the language and culture problem. Another aspect is the form of educational system that exists in other countries as well as the instructional practices that are common to them. Children arrive into the school system with various

experiences of schooling ranging from no prior school experience at all, even for older-age children, to continuous schooling with very little lapse of time between school attendance in the first country and school attendance in the second country. In a very general manner, we might categorize student school experience into three areas:

First Category - Countries which have a compulsory attendance for children and the law is enforced. Often, children who come from such countries have had continuous schooling in their own language, until their migration to the U.S. In that case, the first language in the older child has had a chance to develop and when the child is placed into the regular classroom, although a difficult and often sad experience, it is possible for this child to "make up the territory," by dint of extremely hard work, and, if lucky, family support.

Second Category - Countries which have a compulsory school attendance law for children, but the law is not enforced. Often these are countries of extreme poverty and the children are needed for jobs, such as can be found, in order to help the family survive economically. Some of these countries are in the Caribbean area. These children often speak some type of Creole, often English Creole, but even in countries where Standard English may be the official language, it is not the first language of the home. Therefore, if a student does attend school at all, he/she is learning English as a second language. In some countries this means that as much as 40% of the school population can be ESL students. These students do not have a high development in the first language, often come to the U.S. speaking English, but are poor readers or non-readers in English. Sometimes the first language is a dialect of an Indian language and no possibility of a special program will exist here for such a first language.

Third Category - Countries in which war has closed down the school system and families have experienced the trauma of war and/or

hunger as well as refugee camps along with the anxiety of being forced to migrate. No choice was given to them about leaving their country. The children and their families may also have come from sub-cultures within the main culture and belonged to a group which was closer to rural village life rather than the mainstream culture of their own country. Such children bear emotional scars that are deep. Not only is the first language limited in conceptual skills, but the additional burden of war and/or famine and all its anxieties and effects have left, in so many cases, invisible marks that sometimes take many years before they are made known. The invisibility of these marks are the greatest barrier for an American teacher trying to understand how best to prepare a class.

We have discussed some of the problems that arise from the differences in prior school experience for the older elementary school child and what these differences can mean to the development of the first language. Now we need to ask a related question: What about differences in instructional practices? Do all teachers teach the same? In all countries? Even in the same country? The answer of course, is -- no. Many countries in the world use a lecture format. The subjects are covered on a prescribed schedule and successful performances on national exams are necessary if a student hopes to be admitted to a secondary school or to a university. If the student fails the exam at the secondary school level, he/she is sent to a vocational school. Sometimes students are held back at the primary level until they can pass the national exams. Often memorization is the system of learning. If a student fails one or two courses, they can repeat the course in the summer. In many countries there are no promotions because of social age. Some countries educate boys and girls separately until college. In some countries, women teach women. Teachers are the most respected of all professions in many countries. Classrooms are often austere and have poor AV material, if any. Sometimes classes are large ranging from 40 to 60 students. Corporal punishment is often the rule. The dif-

ferences between the instructional practices of many countries and in schools here in the United States are, in many cases, obvious and need no elaboration. What does need elaboration is that American teachers, because of the emphasis here on innovation, are sometimes seen as "not a real teacher." Some teaching strategies such as group work or peer help are seen as inappropriate at best and foolish at worst, sometimes perceived even as confusing or bizarre. In addition, if a student has been taught English in their own country and had some success learning it, they will resist unfamiliar practices that seem to reject their early ways of successful learning.

Students in the U.S. are sometimes asked to write their own tests, to check their own papers or that of their peers, to evaluate themselves, their classmates and even to evaluate the teacher. Sometimes they are given take-home exams or projects that require partners and small group work. All this is a far cry from lecture formats and memorization. If a student comes to an American school with the feeling that past school experience, if any, has been successful and is now put into classes using unfamiliar instructional practices -- then what? What kind of feelings are experienced? How visible are these feelings?

Mixed in with these differences are the differences in attitudes toward school between native and non-native students. The native-born student feels equal to the teacher, if not in knowledge, than in their person. Native-born parents often feel that they have the right to "check-out" the classroom teacher to see if he or she really knows what they are doing. Contrast this with the foreign-born student and their parents who believe that it is an insult to question the professionalism of the school and any of its personnel. The attitude of the native-born student is reflected in the classroom and is sometimes characterized by disrespect toward the teacher. The foreign-born student does not understand why the

. teacher is "weak" and accepts this attitude of disrespect.

The problems of language and cultural assimilation in our time are many and varied. The attempts of the schools in this country to provide various models and various programs for language learning has been uneven to say the least. There are pockets of success, however. Sometimes these success stories are with individual teachers who do a heroic job under difficult circumstances. Sometimes the success stories are with small school systems who have a commitment toward the needs of the students rather than to the public image of the system. Sometimes there are successful schools on the neighborhood level within a large city school system that are making massive efforts to increase literacy. To sum up some thoughts, perhaps it is in order to make a few general recommendations to several categories of persons.

First, to administrators -- please -- <u>create the conditions for literacy</u> so that <u>possibilities</u> for successful programs can exist. Instead of having itinerant teachers divide their time between several schools, as so often is done, create positions where a teacher can be assigned to one school with perhaps half-time spent with second-language learners and half-time spent with remedial readers. The continuity of a program is severely disrupted when a teacher must spend time "teaching from the back of the car" because he/she is assigned to two or more schools in a district. Please -- explore space in under used schools, so that overcrowded schools need not have several different oral language programs share the same classroom simultaneously. Consider using teachers with strong bilingual or ESL training and experience in positions at the local school level which combine program coordinating with half-time teaching. This would allow successful, experienced teachers to use their expertise in program design as well as allow them to teach and thereby continue to understand the daily learning needs of both native and non-native students. Such persons would serve as bridges

in program design between second language programs and the regular curriculum for native-born students.

Also to be considered are such projects as that of the American Federation of Teachers and its Educational Research and Dissemination Centers. At least one of these centers is "translating" research into training activities for the classroom teachers who then provide feedback into research. Classroom teachers, experienced in the practical daily work of teaching, know what works and what doesn't work. Such centers have the potential of being good examples of partnerships between teacher unions, school systems and business.

Second, we speak to researchers. Your efforts are valuable, but the work needs to be translated from the world of statistics into the language of the common man. Research needs to be readable and accessible. In my own very limited experience of doing interviews for class research projects, the general public, outside of education circles, seems unaware of the basic problems of second culture-second language learning. When the needs are discussed in a dispassionate, but clear manner, the reaction is quite often, "That is very interesting. I don't know much about bilingual education." There is a real need for the public to understand some of the underlying causes of the changes that are taking place within society in our time.

Third, we speak to classroom teachers. Until we have all the support we need in our situations, it is incumbent on us to continue our own professional education. Think over the backgrounds and needs of all the students and don't be afraid to break away from the book, even from the ESL book (at times it's the only way that works). Try writing some of your own curriculum, if that's what it takes and sometimes it does. Many of us are already doing all of these things and much more. Some teachers are even developing individualized programs. As teachers, we are still the generators and powerlights of any school system. We need to have the courage

to speak up, sometimes in the midst of an alien world, for our professional needs and those of our students, if we expect those needs to be listened to and eventually answered.

Finally, we speak to the general public. Become aware! Multilingual, multicultural problems are not peculiar to the United States -- they are worldwide problems. It is projected that by 1990, one out of every two students in many large city school systems will be learning Standard English as a second language or second dialect. In some places such as Los Angeles, the problem already exists. What does this mean to the future of our society? Can a society afford to give 50% of its population less than its best? Where will we take our place on the international stage?

We have to examine our own future and ask what is at stake here. The public, generally, does not appear to remember past history as it truly was for newcomers at the turn of the century and, in fact, well into the century. Perhaps this is the major task of research -- to translate findings into layman's language so that the mistakes of history are not repeated again. To become involved and want to become part of something new means that a person must first have a value about himself or herself. Our children are our greatest resource for the future. If we can give them a feeling of self-worth, not only about what they do now in school, but about who they are, where they come from, about background and heritage which is always part of identity, we can assure ourselves that the children of tomorrow will have the courage to pursue what is new and different. In the face of current world challenges, we must educate persons who are not afraid of the untried. We have developed sophisticated technologies for military defense and to a lesser extent for everyday life. Can we not demonstrate that we have the abilities for the deeper development of the human spirit? Many of us believe that we do have that capacity, but we must ask ourselves the last question: Do we have the will for it?

Karlene Mostek
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SOME RESOURCES FOR LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES
"CULTURALLY LOADED"

1. The Languages of the World - author: Kenneth Katzner
   Funk and Wagnalls, New York (1975) about $16.00

A survey of the world's living languages with more than 200 passages from the literature of those languages shown in native script as well as English translation.

2. Art Activities for ESL Classroom - author: Sally Stocking
   Master's Thesis, School for International Training (1983)
   Eric Document - ED 244 517

Seventeen art activities for use at the intermediate level of English. Students create their own visual aids in order to review specific grammar points, provide conversation practice and improve writing skills.

3. Short World Biographies - author: Henry I. Christ
   Globe Book Co., Inc., New York (1973) about $8.00

Six units on famous persons in sports, film, science, statesmanship, world leaders and the arts. Each unit is followed by a page in developing ideas about careers in one of the unit areas. Each life story is followed by questions on vocabulary, main ideas, details, sequencing of events, drawing conclusions and making predictions. High Intermediate.

4. Meet Your Friends in Other Lands I and II - Miliken Social Studies ditto master book
   Grade 3- easy third grade, written in present tense, can be used with advanced beginner or low intermediate ESL student. Each book (about $5.00 each) has material on four countries, approximately 6-7 pages on each country. Each unit deals with food, clothes, housing and special holidays and products. Review pages on all countries are at the end of both books. All pages are amply illustrated and can be colored by students.

5. Famous Black Americans - author: John and Marcet King
   Steck Vaughn Co., Austin, TX (1975) about $4.00

28 stories about famous black Americans. Each story is about two pages and is followed by questions on vocabulary and comprehension. Intermediate level.

6. Our Human Ties - Los Angeles Unified School District
   Instructional Publications, Rm.G-390
   450 N. Grand Avenue
   Los Angeles, CA 90012
   7 volumes, each volume about 90 pages, some more some less. (1976) $18.95

Seven volumes which can be used in the regular classroom or by an ESL teacher. Emphasis is on understanding cultural differences and similarities. Each volume was very clear classroom activities, with objectives, materials, procedure for teaching and expanded activities. A very excellent resource. Adaptable to any level of English.

FOOTNOTES

1. H. Douglas Brown, Principles of Language Learning and Teaching (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1980), p 132.

2. Ibid., pp 133-134.

3. James Cummins, "The Role of Primary Language Development in Promoting Educational Success for Language Minority Students," Schooling and Language Minority Students: A theoretical framework (Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1985). p 20.

4. Bernard Weiss, (Ed.) American Education and the European Immigrant: 1840-1940 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982) pp 32-41,66.

5. Jack Berryman, "Importance of Immigrant Parents in the Children's Learning of a Second Language" TESL Talk, Vol. 14, No.3 (Summer 1983) pp 27-28.

6. TIME Magazine, Vol. 126, No.1 (7/8/85): p 85.

7. Howard H. Kleinmann, "External Influences and Their Neutralization in Second Language Acquisition: A Look at Adult Indochinese Refugees" TESOL Quarterly, Vol. 16, No.2 (June, 1982) p 240.

8. James Cummins, Schooling and Language Minority Students: A theoretical framework. pp 36-37.

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